

File: ETHEL.WPS
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Transcribed by H.M.Wilson 22/7/1992
Typed by I.L.Berryman 9/9/1992

Statement of William Shakespeare Hall of the schooner *Ethel* in reference to the late hurricane of the 7th inst, who says:-

During the late hurricane we were lying in Coolgoora Creek (Mary Ann Patch), we having gone there to clean her. The weather appearing very unsettled & changeable we determined to remain there until the weather was settled. On the morning of the 7th inst at 7 a.m. the wind was very fresh with squalls of wind and rain from E by N. As the gale increased the wind veered round to N.E. from which direction it continued to blow with increasing fury until 11.45 a.m. - John O'Grady senior & myself being then in the cabin, he observed to me that the gale was increasing every moment, to which I replied "It was sure to". O'Grady senior then went on deck & immediately called me to come up on deck. On my reaching the deck O'Grady said that I had better clear the big anchor & let it go, as we were then dragging with the small anchor down. We accordingly let go the big anchor; - after letting go 15 fathoms of chain with it - one of the chain shackles jammed in the hawser-pipe, it being too large. We tried to clear it but could not as the strain was too great. As everything was pretty snug on deck we went below to get clear of the spray & rain which was cutting us like hail-stones. Up to this time we had only anticipated a heavy gale as the barometer intimated nothing more. On going below I observed to O'Grady senior that it was a hurricane & he replied that it was. We had not been below more than two minutes when O'Grady senior after looking out of the companion way & then said come up Mr Hall, the vessel is dragging on to the mangroves. We immediately went on deck, when the vessel was dashed on to the mangroves with immense force, which caused the bulwarks stanchions & all to give way clean to the covering board fore & aft. I then went to the pump supposing that the Vessel might be making water, O'Grady observing at the same time that it was useless pumping.

O'Grady then went aft & told his son O'Grady junior to put some matches in a small bottle & cork it up tight. O'Grady then come to me & told me to leave the pumps as the vessel was bilged & the cabin filling with water. I then went below & John O'Grady junior then said to me "Do you think Mr Hall, we shall get on shore". To which I replied "We shall be able to swim ashore easily" - I then went on deck the boy following me. On reaching the deck, O'Grady senior said that we must leave her - I replied "Do you not think it would be better to go aloft". He answered in the negative as he seemed to think, she might roll over, as she did a few years ago, with another owner. O'Grady senior then told the natives to jump into the water, which they did very willingly. He then handed them his sea-chest which he had previously locked up. We all followed the natives in good order & struck out for the land. We very quicky swam through the mangroves, when finding all the country was under water after swimming from the mangroves a short distance - I remarked to O'Grady senior, that we had better go back to the mangroves & have a spell, which we did. We remained there for some time being uncertain how far it was to land. We were now shifting from tree to tree as each tree we were on got submerged. The tide now began to rise rapidly - the wind being with the tide. I being near O'Grady senior, I shouted to him that we could not remain there long as the tide was rising fast. To which he replied "No". About 30 minutes afterwards the whole of the mangroves were nearly under water. The tide must have risen 5 or 6 feet in that time. The natives then left us. John O'Grady junior having been washed off his tree swam to mine which had a double-top. He reached the branch I was on & got up very quickly. He was then uninjured. He got up above me & I shouted to him to keep down, for if it went any higher up it, it would break. Thinking that that part of the tree would not hold the two of us I went to the lower branch. The waves were now & had been for some time submerging us at intervals of 2 seconds, so that we began to be much exhausted. I was just preparing to strike out for the land when the branch I was on broke off & I was washed away. When I came to the surface I looked around & saw

the boy O'Grady still on his tree. I found it was useless to attempt to get back, so being an able swimmer struck out for the land the direction of which we were all cognizant of. I soon found that my limbs were so benumbed that it was useless attempting to swim & the seas going continually over me that I determined to just support myself in the water & allow the wind & sea to drift me ashore. I had not drifted very far before I touched the ground. I immediately shouted as loud as I could to attract the attention of any that might be within hailing distance. O'Grady senior landed immediately after me & asked me if I had seen his son. I replied "No". The weather clearing a bit, we saw another wreck with one white man & some natives clinging to the top-side. I, for a moment thought that this was the *Ethel* which the boy (O'Grady) might have returned to, but it eventually turned out to be the cutter *Sarah* (John Brockman). I hailed J. Brockman with great difficulty, when they managed to haul their dingy up on the boom & empty the water out of her & two white men that could not swim came ashore in her. John Brockman swam ashore with the natives to keep them from swamping the dingy. I did not see the boy O'Grady after I last saw him clinging to the tree. O'Grady senior, after landing, went immediately to look for his son, when not finding him, he returned & we all made our way to the hills. We being all naked, cold, hungry & exhausted the natives dug pits into the sand which we got into. At sundown, it having lulled a bit, Mr Brockman went with two men to the *Sarah* & got some wet blankets which we slept under. At about 8 p.m. the wind went to the westward & blew with greater fury than before. At this time I observed to Mr Brockman that I felt the earth shake & he replied that he felt it also. The next morning two parties from the *Adele* & *Fortescue* cutters (which were at the time of the storm 3 miles to the east & three miles to the west of us) came across us & informed us that they had noticed the same phenomenon. About 10 p.m. on the 8th inst we repaired to the *Sarah* & procured provisions & O'Grady senior, having found the bottle with the matches in we made a good fire & had a good meal - The natives subsequently found the remains of John O'Grady

junior, which we interred. The grave being marked with a cross with his name and the date of his death cut on it. The cutter *Sarah* was uninjured & the *Ethel* (which had her bows torn out by the shackle jamming in the hawser-pipe) we repaired, ready to launch as soon as we shall have sufficient tide & appliances - owing to the rapidity with which the tide rose, its height, & the distance it went inland - every-one that was about the vicinity at the time has come to the conclusion that there was a tidal wave.

(signed) W.S.Hall

Witness: Edw.A.Lemon P.C. at Cossack 24th January, 1881

H.M. Wilson.